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ABSTRACT

This bibliography contains annotations of 12 journal articles and documents, all indexed in the ERIC system. The entries deal with various aspects of school climate and generally emphasize climate improvement. Annotated materials cover such topics as school climate and principal behavior, school climate and educational change, organizational development, leader-staff relations, and leadership. Two sources are case studies of climate changes in specific schools. (DS)

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The Best of ERIC

Clearinghouse on Educational Management

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Materials were selected for inclusion from the ERIC catalogs *Resources in Education (RIE)* and *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE).*

This bibliography was prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management for distribution by the American Association of School Administrators, the Association of California School Administrators, and the Wisconsin Secondary School Administrators Association.

Improving School Climate

1. Bogue, E. G. "One Foot in the Stirrup." ***Phi Delta Kappan***, 53, 8 (April 1972), pp. 506-08. EJ 056 948.

"The man who tells the truth should have one foot in the stirrup." This old Turkish proverb—the source for the title of Bogue's lively article—describes the situation in many schools. Bogue believes administrators must foster an organizational climate in which subordinates who communicate openly about problems or dissatisfaction do not have to live "with one foot in the stirrup."

Bogue maintains that an organizational climate of trust and openness produces high productivity. He believes that administrators must be aware of the function of conflict and negative feedback in an organization as the impetus for positive change. Administrators must learn to view dissatisfaction and criticism as something to be listened to rather than to be repressed. They must learn to manage conflict and channel it so that it is not disruptive but is the first step toward organizational renewal.

Bogue notes that an open, trusting climate where subordinates are not afraid of expressing ideas is based on an administrator's positive self-concept. Self-confident administrators are able to avoid defensiveness in the face of criticism and to value conflict as a way of learning about their strengths and their weaknesses.

2. Bonney, Lewis A. "Changes in Organizational Climate Associated with Development and Implementation of an Educational Management System." [1972]. 26 pages. ED 066 790.

Bonney describes efforts in the San Bernardino City (California) Unified School District to improve school climate by decentralizing decision-making and sharing responsibility for program results. The fifty-eight schools in this program instituted what Bonney calls a "humanistic" management system in which teachers, principals, and the superintendent met together to choose school goals and classroom priorities.

The instrument they used to measure changes in school climate was Likert's "Profile of Organizational Characteristics," which found significant changes in leadership processes, motivational forces, and communication processes. Specifically, principals were more motivated to achieve school and district goals and felt that superiors and subordinates displayed more trust and confidence and were more committed to organizational goals. In addition, the schools showed improvement in achievement scores.

Of special interest is the appendix, which outlines the elements of the plan in four particular schools. These include the specific school goals and strategies actually prepared by teachers and principals.

3. Breckenridge, Eileen. "Improving School Climate." ***Phi Delta Kappan***, 58, 4 (December 1976), pp. 314-18. EJ 148 056.

This story of changes in one school's climate is a little reminiscent of an old-time melodrama. When the authoritarian principal "Mr. Jefferson" turns into approachable, power-sharing "Bob Jefferson" there is a temptation to cheer the miraculous conversion. In spite of the soap-opera suspense, however, the article has a ring of truth to it, and scattered throughout the drama are explanations of a number of useful techniques for improving school climate.

Breckenridge (a pseudonym) begins by describing techniques for improving school climate used in a workshop attended by teachers in her anonymous Oregon district. This workshop was run by William Maynard, the author of an article described elsewhere in this bibliography.

Most important of these techniques is the 1-3-6 exercise, which begins with individuals making lists of their ideas of what is needed to improve the school. Participants then meet in groups of three and combine their lists, deleting no items but listing identical items only once. Finally, groups of six are formed, which again consolidate lists. In this way comprehensive lists of perceived school problems can be communicated to school authorities without fear of reprisals.

After the lists have been compiled, each person ranks all the items according to priority, and all the priorities are tallied to determine the top ten problems on which the staff should focus.

How this and other techniques were used to relieve tension between teachers and the principal makes good reading and ought to be helpful to schools with similar problems.

4. Clark, Frank J. ***Improving the School Climate.*** Operations Notebook 19. Burlingame, California: Association of California School Administrators, 1977. 42 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

Clark is so excited about his and others' ideas for improving school climate that his paragraphs sometimes tumble all over each other in random order, and he is so intensely involved with

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his subject matter that he often doesn't bother to explain what he is talking about. Nevertheless, there are numerous good ideas crammed into the pages of this many-faceted notebook, and it is worth the trouble of trying to extract them.

Most valuable are the many practical and specific suggestions for improving school climate that have been used by school districts. These suggestions include such things as a teacher advisory board, a student forum, and a variety of feedback forms for staff and students.

One of Clark's methods for defining school climate is to describe the characteristics of schools that have poor climates. These he lists as low innovativeness drive, job dissatisfaction, student alienation, lack of creativity, complacency, uniformity, and frustration. Administrators can use this list as a checklist to see if their schools need to put energy into school climate improvement techniques.

Clark explains the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire, which he calls "one of the best tools to assess school climate." He includes sample questions from the instrument and explains how scoring works. He explains, too, the CFK Ltd. School Climate Profile Instrument. A short bibliography is also attached.

5. Doak, E. Dale. "Organizational Climate: Prelude to Change." ***Educational Leadership***, 27, 4 (January 1970), pp. 367-71. EJ 022 630.

"This climate is the cornerstone for educational change," contends Doak of organizational climate. He believes that one reason educational innovations often fail is that important factors in the organizational climate are ignored.

For Doak, the factors that determine organizational climate are "goal definition, leadership style, morale, and self-worth." Each of these must receive prime attention in planning for change. For an organization to be ready for change, its goals must first be concurrent with the goals of the individuals in it, and the morale and feelings of self-worth of its members must be high.

Most of all, the organizational leader must create an "open climate," which to Doak means that individuals are constantly searching for alternatives. This is based on an administrator's courage to admit that clear, pat answers to highly complex issues do not now exist. In short, an administrator must be able to live with ambiguity.

In this article, Doak makes graphic his theories about the influence of the organizational climate on the change process by providing a model depicting each step in the change process in schools.

6. Howard, Eugene R. "School Climate Improvement." ***Thrust for Education Leadership***, 3, 3 (January 1974), pp. 12-14. EJ 092 195.

"I am convinced that it is now possible to build a school climate within which pupils and staff will be happier, more mentally healthy, more positive in their outlook on life and more productive," concludes Howard in this clearly written article containing a number of techniques for accomplishing just that.

Howard's own particular definition of school climate is the "aggregate of social and cultural conditions which influence individual behavior in the school—all of the forces to which the individual responds which are present in the school environment."

The author uses Halpin and Croft's terms "open" and "closed" to describe school climates, though he means by these something a bit more specific than these early researchers did.

By "open" he means climates that evidence widespread involvement in decision-making, foster open communication channels, and "stimulate learners and encourage self-confidence and independence."

Howard suggests "opening" the school climate by forming nonhierarchical teaching teams, including students in the evaluation of their work, and revising the grading system to offer more opportunities for success. One unique idea is to interview a group of the students generally thought of as the school's "losers" and to form a task force to do something about one of their concerns.

7. Maynard, William. "A Case Study: The Impact of a Humanistic School Climate." ***NASSP Bulletin***, 60, 399 (April 1976), pp. 16-20. EJ 149 642.

Maynard's article is a little short on theory, but it is long on specific and useful ideas for improving school climate. Maynard does not bother to outline his conception of what a humanistic school climate is or to make any generalizations about the elements that make it up, but he does tell a refreshing story of how Cleveland High School in Seattle was made "a more satisfying place to be" by "students and administrators working together" on projects that ranged from implementing a shared decision-making model to painting murals in the halls.

When Maynard first became principal of Cleveland High, the students felt alienated, skipped class, and frequently requested to transfer to other schools. Three years later, students were proud of their school, the absentee rate improved from 35 percent per period per day to 5.6 percent, and more students wanted to transfer into the school than out.

One of Maynard's techniques for solving Cleveland's problems was to form a school climate team of students and faculty to develop projects and ideas designed to improve the school. The opportunities for shared decision-making that Maynard introduced into the school included having teachers and students on committees that interview prospective staff members, make budget decisions, and regulate "almost every function within the building."

8. Newell, Terry. "Organization Development in Schools." ***American Education***, 9, 10 (December 1973), pp. 28-32. EJ 090 452.

Newell describes organization development (OD) as a means for improving the organizational climate in schools. He defines

organizational climate as "the variety of individual and group behavior patterns" in the school. He explains that OD "rests on the assumption, born out of sociological and psychological research, that organizational health requires an organizational climate characterized by mutual trust, open communication, and participatory decision-making."

Newell gives examples of various training efforts that organizational developers have undertaken to improve communication and problem-solving skills in schools in the Northwest. Schools whose staffs participated in such training reported a decrease in teacher turnover and a widespread feeling by teachers that they were better able to make decisions and to facilitate group decision-making.

Newell contends that the success of school innovation or reform depends on a healthy organizational climate. When "this climate is marked by distrust, lack of commitment to the innovation, poor communication, intergroup conflict, unclear goals, ineffective decision-making, or similar behaviors, the chances for successful reform are considerably diminished." Thus, OD attempts to facilitate needed innovation in schools by first creating a climate ready to accept change.

Warning that OD is not a panacea, Newell emphasizes that it is not "neatly packaged" but rather a complex body of theory and technique that must be used carefully and differently in each unique educational system.

9. Phi Delta Kappa. ***School Climate Improvement: A Challenge to the School Administrator.*** An Occasional Paper. Bloomington, Indiana: 1974. 149 pages. ED 102 665.

This paper is a lengthy and complete guide to enhancing school climate. It is based on the authors' belief in the importance of a "humane" school climate. They view respect, trust, high morale, opportunities for input, cohesiveness, renewal, and caring as major components of such a climate. Aimed largely at principals, the paper envisions the administrator's role regarding school climate as one of assessing needs, setting goals, and reducing goals to manageable projects. Schools with high absenteeism, discipline problems, or faculty apathy will find suggestions here aimed at solving such problems.

According to the authors, the first and most significant step in improving school climate is its assessment and analysis. Toward this end, they reprint the entire CFK Ltd. School Climate Profile to help administrators determine what aspects of school climate need improvement. They also include a checklist to gauge school climate improvement.

The publication presents ideas and suggestions from several authors as well as from 200 school administrators involved in school climate improvement. Such suggestions include involving staff and students in brainstorming sessions to identify climate problems, organizing a collegial team to undertake school climate improvements, and visiting other schools involved in school climate projects. The paper also includes a seven-page bibliography of readings, assessment instruments, films, and "human resources."

10. Shaheen, Thomas A., and Pedrick, W. Roberts. ***School District Climate Improvement: A Challenge to the School Superintendent.*** Denver: CFK Ltd., 1974. 154 pages. ED 105 605.

Based on the Phi Delta Kappa publication for principals, this lengthy paper focuses on the role of superintendents and other central office personnel in building a vigorous school climate throughout the school district. Shaheen and Pedrick provide a complete step-by-step guide for administrators who want to develop "the healthy climate needed by the school district to support positive growth."

The tightly organized paper first lists initial goals for becoming a school climate leader, then lists projects for attaining those goals and how to go about them. Another section includes a number of activities that facilitate the involvement of staff in setting climate improvement goals. Finally, the publication lists school district climate determinants and describes "what each determinant might look like in a school district where the climate for that particular determinant is exemplary."

Although examples of exemplary school climates are a bit less concrete than might be wished ("Each of those concerned with the problem has input into the decision" or "Staff actively works toward the elimination of failure"), these broad generalizations are nevertheless flexible enough to be applicable to each district's unique problems.

The CFK Ltd. School District Climate Profile is included, as well as a fifteen-page bibliography of readings, assessment instruments, and persons knowledgeable on the subject.

11. Wiggins, Thomas W. "Principal Behavior in the School Climate: A Systems Analysis." ***Educational Technology***, 11, 9 (September 1971), pp. 57-59. EJ 046 738.

Instead of examining the administrator's effect on the school climate as most authors do, Wiggins examines instead the

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10. Nueva Day Care and Learning Center, CFK, Ltd. Publications, 6565 Skyline Blvd., Hillsborough, CA 94010. $4.00.
11. Educational Technology, 140 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. Single copy of Sept. 1971 issue, $4.00.
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effects of school climate on the administrator. Wiggins sees organizational climate as "the state of the organization which results from the interaction that takes place between organizational members as they fulfill their prescribed roles while satisfying their individual needs." This makes him different from other authors who see organizational climate as something that produces certain behaviors rather than something that ***is produced by*** these behaviors.

One corollary of Wiggins's theories is that principals are more influenced by organizational climate than they influence it. He believes that we must reexamine the theories that maintain that the "power, authority and influence of school principals provide the major source of thrust and significance to the educational enterprise."

Specifically, Wiggins believes that principals are greatly influenced by a need for the internal approval of the staff and the external approval of the district. He has noticed that "the principal's personality becomes gradually dominated by the school's expectations as the length of time he is in school increases."

Apparently Wiggins does not see this state of affairs as inevitable, however. He believes his theory has implications for the choosing and training of school principals "who can contribute applicable expertise to the total system and not merely perpetuate existing traditions."

12. Wood, Fred H. "Attitudes toward a Personalized, Individualized High School Program." ***NASSP Bulletin***, 60, 399 (April 1976), pp. 21-25. EJ 149 643.

In this article, Wood describes a program designed to improve school climate by individualizing instruction, improving communication, expanding learning options, and personalizing the relationships among teachers, students, parents, and administrators. This program is the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (I/D/E/A) change program for high schools, also referred to as the Learning Community School (LCS) model.

This model, as adopted by McCluer North High School in St. Louis County, Missouri, in 1971-72, included contracted learning and out-of-school learning options for students as well as teacher advisors for every twenty students. These advisors helped students plan a personal learning program as well as reported progress to parents. In addition, a teacher advisory decision-making group was appointed, an extensive parent communications program was developed, and a number of parents and other adults became involved in the school through the out-of-school learning program.

Results of the program that had direct effects on the school climate included students' positive feelings about the school and their teachers; the staffs' positive feelings about their profession, students, and the principal; and parents' support of the school, teaching staff, and curriculum.

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